

Thesis By Publication

Answers to questions submitted via chat to *GR Dev Workshop 2023-2025*

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Percentage of research undertaken as part of PhD candidature

Does the "at least half of the research has been undertaken during your enrolment as a PhD candidate" requirement refer to half your entire PhD research project, or half the research for each paper? For example if you do all the research for a background review prior to officially starting your PhD and publish this paper within the PhD period then produce multiple papers during the PhD period for your thesis, can the background review go towards your PhD even if you undertook the bulk of the research before starting your PhD?

The Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination policy states that “at least half of the work done towards the thesis must be undertaken while formally enrolled as an HDR candidate at Macquarie University”; i.e. the requirement refers to half of your entire PhD project.

The answer to the second question is Yes. If you did all the research for your background review paper prior to candidature, but published that paper within candidature, you could include it in your TbP.

Note that you should not include a paper that was published before your PhD candidature, even if all the other papers in your thesis were prepared during candidature.

For a part time PhD, would a paper published as part of your employment will be given credit if it is submitted during the PhD period.

Assuming you were the sole/main author of the paper: If the paper contributes to answering your research question(s), was published during your candidature, and your supervisor agrees that it is sufficiently weighty and at PhD level, then yes: you could include it as a paper in your TbP. This is the case whether you have a part-time or full-time study load.

Data and focus of papers

Do you have to include all of your data in your thesis?

Not necessarily, this is a discussion to have with your supervisor. You may want to include

all the data and analysis in an Appendix, or only the analysis of the data. You are not obliged to include all your collected data in the thesis document, whether it is TbP or thesis by monograph.

Could a paper be added in the appendix of your final document?

If a paper you've (co-)authored during candidature is NOT included in your thesis because it did not contribute to your research story, there are a few ways you could include it in your thesis:

1. Cite it where appropriate;
2. Include a list of other relevant research outputs (papers, conference posters, presentations, industry reports, traditional media articles etc.) in the front pages of your thesis;
3. Include screen shots of posters, front pages of journal articles etc in an appendix.

Can different papers focus on the same group of participants in a study?

Yes, but each paper will have to describe the participants, so there will be overlap. If the papers are published at different times, then the first paper can describe the participants in detail and the second paper can provide a shorter description and refer readers to the first paper for more detail. If the articles are submitted at the same time, you can still do this (ie have one paper cite the other for details on participants) and inform the journal editor that there are two related papers that are being submitted to different journals.

If I wrote a paper on the method which is unique which doesn't specifically relate to research questions but of course it is the way I have addressed the research question. Can I include this method paper as a publication in in my thesis?

Yes. A method paper can be included as a legitimate publication in the thesis if the candidate has created an innovative method/methodology or adapted an existing one, and justified its application and contribution to future research in the field.

Where can I include additional or supplementary data?

You can hyperlink to an appendix or external website, as appropriate.

Thesis format – Monograph or TbP

How can we know whether our PhD candidature is based on thesis by publication or the traditional one? In consultation with your supervisor, you should decide on your thesis format early in candidature, as your chapters will look different depending on which format you choose. A “traditional” thesis will include only chapters, although papers may

have been published during candidature, based on these chapters. A TbP will include at least two papers that have been published, accepted, submitted or prepared for publication; these papers take the place of traditional thesis chapters.

Are research proposals for a Thesis by Publication different to thesis by monograph?

No, but if you indicate Thesis by Publication to be the format you would have to indicate that this best serves the research. It could be the 'proposed format' but this may change. Assessors of PhD research proposals look at significance and feasibility of the proposed project, and do not hold you to the thesis format proposed.

Do you have to indicate in the CoC what format the thesis takes? And, is there a cut off point for deciding on the format?

Yes, you usually would indicate what format the thesis takes in the CoC, usually as a proposed table of contents – check the guidelines provided by your faculty. There is no official cut off point on the decided format; this is under the guidance of the supervisor. The final format depends on the feasibility of the data and other factors that may affect the preferred format, sometimes depending on discipline.

Is there a preferred format, either monograph or Thesis by Publication based on discipline?

Some disciplines prefer a monograph thesis, while other disciplines prefer Thesis by Publication. Disciplinary conventions change. It is important to have a conversation with your supervisor on the preferred format of a thesis in your discipline. If you are working on a monograph format, you can still publish papers during candidature separate to your thesis. Some disciplines or certain jurisdictions/countries may favour one thesis format over the other.

Is there a representative within each department or school that can answer discipline-specific questions on TbP?

Yes, the Research Training Director for your school of department should be able to answer discipline-specific questions on TbP. You can also approach your Research Librarian.

Thesis parts

Authorship statement: Is the Authorship contribution added into the body of the thesis or as an appendix?

The Authorship Contribution Statement is included just before each paper. Additionally,

some candidates also include their Author Contribution Statements at the beginning of their thesis within the preliminary pages.

Should a contribution statement be included next to every single paper.

Yes.

Linking sections: If the publications substantially answer the research question, can you rely on the papers rather than beefing up the linking sections?

The linking sections do not need to be long, and you should certainly not feel obliged to 'beef up' any section of your thesis just to fill pages. For instance, a linking section might be one paragraph, reminding examiners how the next paper fits into the overall thesis story. Your introductory and concluding chapters, however, should be substantial, as they justify the project and explain how the papers form a single coherent and integrated body of work.

Repetition: I am worried that my introduction (if I were to write a lengthy intro summarising all of the background) would be repeated within the introduction of each of the published papers. But if you don't write a comprehensive intro, will an examiner think that you have not covered the intro?

Regardless of the thesis format, you should open your thesis with a substantial introductory chapter, outlining the motivation for the study ("background"), the aim of the study, and the way the thesis is structured to fulfil that aim and answer the research question(s). Some repetition is expected in a TbP, as the papers need to be able to stand alone and be comprehended as individual texts with their own readers.

Would you include the headings and subheadings from the article in the Table of contents?

You can definitely include them, but you'll see that some people don't and just put their article title in the thesis contents.

Can a literature review paper be included in a thesis by publication?

Yes. A literature review paper can be included in a thesis by publication. If a candidate has written a paper that reviews previous studies on their thesis topic, it can be part of the thesis along with other papers. For example, the second exemplar Thesis analysed in the HASS Breakout Room includes a systematic literature review.

Supervision

With a TbP, do your supervisors need to be attached to MQU? i.e., can all my supervisors be from other academic institutions?

According to Macquarie University's [Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy](#), your Principal and Associate supervisors must be Macquarie University staff members or affiliates. There are some exceptions (eg your Principal Supervisor may have been an MQ staff member when you *started* your PhD but took a redundancy and are now an MQ *honorary* academic), which are specified under Clause 9 of the HDR Supervision Policy.

You may have others in your supervisory team who are not employed at MQ, eg an Adjunct HDR Supervisor, HDR Advisor, HDR Cultural Advisor, but your Principal Supervisor is expected to be an MQ staff member.

Note that this policy regarding Supervision applies whether you are doing a TbP or a thesis by monograph.

Formatting

Is there a template for the thesis itself?

Not specifically but you access a latex/overleaf version of an MQ Thesis template here:

<https://www.overleaf.com/latex/templates/macquarie-university-thesis/gmrqphxhkspz>

Wordcount

Minimum and maximum word count?

This varies by discipline, to a maximum of 100,000 words. TbP tend to be shorter.

Are there guidelines on wordcount in general for thesis by publication? (include published papers and any unpublished sections). Related question: Are there any guidelines on how many words should the "linking" sections be?

There are word-count guidelines for a whole thesis, and these tend to be discipline-specific. Some disciplines have more descriptive text than others. There are no word-count guidelines for the linking sections, because working out the coherence is your task, and will be individual to the parts and problems that you design.

Can you confirm which words/text aren't counted in the word count? I got that words in tables aren't counted - what others? Do the papers count towards the word count?

Yes, words in the papers count towards the word count. What is NOT counted are words

in the following sections/objects: tables, figures, front pages (e.g. contents, abstract, acknowledgements etc) references, appendices.

References

Where do I put the reference list?

There is a reference list at the end of every paper, for works cited in that paper, but you also include a full reference list at the end of the thesis.

Publications will have a list of references. They may be the same or different. Do you include a full list of references or is there enough in the papers?

In a thesis by publication, it is a common practice to attach a list of references at the end of each of the chapters or papers included rather than compiling a full list of references at the end. Since each paper includes its own references, include them as they are, even if there are overlaps between references in different papers or chapters.

Corrections

Can an examiner challenge and/or request corrections to a paper even if has already been published by a journal?

Yes, an examiner considers published and unpublished papers in the same way as a monograph, that is they can request changes. Although the paper itself can't be changed, revisions can be made in the thesis. So, you could add an addendum section to the paper in the form of a summary that addresses the changes requested.

Your supervisor can also assist with refusing requested changes if these are not considered to be in the best interest of the thesis.

Co-authoring

Do co-authors in a thesis-by-publication need to be your supervisors?

Related question: if someone is included in the research team in ethics application, does it mean he/she will have to be a co-author in the paper?

No. You may submit papers you've co-authored with others outside of your supervisory/research team. But if your supervisor(s) or anyone else on the research team did work on the paper in a way that constitutes co-authorship as defined in the [MQ Authorship Standard](#), provided they agree, they should be named as co-author(s). If your

supervisor (or anyone else on the research team) has not worked on the paper in a way that would constitute authorship, you are not obliged or indeed permitted to name them as a co-author.

Of the 2-8 papers in a TBP, is there a minimum number of papers for which we need to be the first author?

There is no stated minimum, but the MQ [Graduate Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination policy](#) Section 24 states that “Where a paper has multiple authors, the student **should usually be the principal author** and evidence of this must appear in the appropriate manner for the discipline.” (emphasis added). I would recommend you be the first author on the majority, if not all, of the papers in your TBP. After all, it’s *your* PhD project!

Do I need to be first author to have a paper included or it is OK to have a substantial contribution? And how much would be considered substantial?

While it is expected that you would be the first author, this is not required.

According to the [MQ Authorship Standard](#), all authors on a paper need to have:

been directly involved in its creation by making a substantial intellectual or scholarly contribution, in at least one, and usually a combination of two or more, of the following criteria:

- i. conceiving or designing the project or output*
- ii. acquiring data where this has involved significant intellectual judgment, planning, design or input*
- iii. contributing knowledge, where justified, including indigenous knowledge*
- iv. analysing and interpreting the data; or*
- v. writing or critically revising significant parts of the intellectual content of the research output, to the extent that this contributes to its interpretation.*

To include a paper in your TBP, you would be expected to contribute to at least two of these criteria, especially writing the paper. A guideline is 50% contribution at least.

Does it have a negative impact on PhD if there are 6 authors for a paper?

No, as long as you have done most of the work on the paper. Your Authorship Contribution Statement for the paper will specify what you did, and your examiners will assess whether the quality and extent of your contribution warrants the award of the degree.

Does including an externally authored paper cause any problem with the publication itself? or is it published as a usual article and the only thing needed is to get the permission of these authors so that it could also be added to your thesis?

There are no problems with having the paper published with authors external to supervisory team or Macquarie University, but you do need to have permission from your co-authors to have the paper included in your thesis. Note that your completed thesis will eventually be made available digitally on MQ's ResearchOnline. If you have questions around copyright, published articles and making your thesis available on ResearchOnline, please email researchonline@mq.edu.au

Can I co-author with students from other universities.

Yes, so long as you have made a substantial contribution and the paper relates to your thesis.

What is the expectation of whether or not you are the first author (or other)?

Usually the researcher who does the most work and/or who writes the first draft is given first place in the author list, but author order can be negotiated; it should be discussed and agreed on between the co-authors in the planning stage. Sometimes author-order does not reflect work contribution but is simply alphabetical or assigned in some other way; in that case, a note will explain the rationale behind the order of names. Regardless, in a TbP, you will need to make clear what your contribution to each paper was. A guideline is more than 50%.

Can I co-publish with my supervisor as an MRes candidate?

Yes, you can publish with your supervisor as an MRes candidate. You need to include authorship contributions to demonstrate that it is primarily your research and that you are the first author listed. Co-authorship with your supervisor can be discipline specific and/or up to the discretion of the supervisor. Sometimes, if the supervisor's research doesn't align with the supervisor's research they might decline.

Do we have to include sole authored papers as well as co-authored papers?

No, you do not have to have sole authored papers, they can all be co-authored but you are expected to be the first author or at least to have made a substantial contribution to all of the papers.

Some papers have worked out the author's contribution very specifically. How do you calculate the precise percentage of contribution?

It is best to have that conversation upfront to determine what everyone is doing. There are no specific guidelines on this, but you may see in some examples that

author/researcher contribution is a guestimate rather than being based explicitly on time tracking. You may also find examples with a declaration of what parts each author contributed to but without a quantitative breakdown.

Do I need to fill out the authorship contribution statement if a paper is not included in the thesis but is cited?

You don't need the authorship contribution statement if you're just citing a paper.

During my candidature, I have contributed to papers with colleagues in my department in the same research area, but these were not really linked to my research question. Could I include this paper in my thesis or not?

If the paper is not contributing substantially to your research story (“coherent and integrated body of work”) i.e. does not address any of your research questions or hypotheses, then it would be better to cite the paper than to insert it as a chapter.

Conference papers and Review articles

Is there specific guidance on how to prepare/present a conference presentation as part of a thesis by publication?

Some disciplines (eg Computer Science, Engineering) require conference presenters to submit what is essentially a whole article, which often undergoes a peer review process; it is these types of conference paper that could be included in a TbP. For most other conferences, presenters submit a short abstract, which is published in the conference program, and they present from slides or a poster at the conference; the Abstract/Slides/Poster would *not* constitute a paper for the purposes of TbP.

Can you include a conference paper in a thesis by publication.

Yes, if it is a written article that looks like a journal paper with references and has been published in Conference Proceedings that has an ISBN.

Can you include a Review Article as one of your papers?

Yes, a Review Article can be included as part of your Thesis by Publication.

Are review papers considered as a part of thesis by publication?

Yes, systematic review papers may be included in a TbP.

If you have three articles prepared for publication and you submit to a journal later on, can you send it as is, or do you need to paraphrase the article it to avoid matching similarities i.e. plagiarism?

You should be able to submit the paper as is. Part of the function of the declaration for a

Thesis by Publication is to address and acknowledge replication of text. This is one situation where it's not considered self-plagiarism. It doesn't quite sit under the same copyright rules as publishing in one journal article and then taking that same data and publishing again in another journal article, which is considered self-plagiarism. So, you can submit the articles as part of the Thesis by Publication without changing them unless they have amendments.

If you've submitted your thesis and have done changes requested by the examiner, but in the meantime have submitted your article to a journal which has been accepted, then there may be journal copyright protection and what may happen is that the impending article is taken out of the final thesis document before it gets published. If you look at some of the examples, you may come across instances where a chapter has a title, and some pre-emptive text with just a link to the article, and no actual text after that; that's because of copyright, and the article has been removed from the submitted thesis.

I'm interested in writing for some different stakeholders and there are journals that are more focused on professional audience, rather than academic. If I write an article for my professional audience that's less academic, but still includes my research, can I include that as a paper in the thesis? Or do I just include it as additional material that I've created during my PhD.

That's probably a discussion you need to have with your supervisor. Realistically examiners should be reading your material as if it's been published and accepted.

Follow up question: If I published an article and then wrote about the published article in a manner that's more accessible to a different audience, am I self-plagiarising?

If you don't re-use whole chunks of the document then it should be fine, you can always include the alternate article in the appendix.

Publication requirements

Just wondering what's the alternative way of finishing a PhD instead of Thesis by Publication? For MRes, we just need to pass the examination. Does that also apply to PhD? or it does it have to be published?

The alternative format to a Thesis by Publication is a standard monograph or “big book” thesis. If you do a TbP, the papers in the thesis do not need to have been *published* for you to be awarded the degree. A completed TbP may include papers that are merely *prepared* for publication. But even though there is no publication requirement for the PhD to be awarded, we would recommend that you do submit your papers for publication eventually.

For more details on the thesis examination process and outcomes, refer to the **Examination and Completion** section on the [Thesis preparation, submission and examination website](#) and the **Degree Award Recommendations** section of the [Higher Degree Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Policy](#).

Thesis or Research embargo:

You can request an embargo of your thesis online if it contains particular data with intellectual property, that you want to withhold from being released publicly. The library and the copyright team will contact you when you're at that stage to check any requirements before publishing of your thesis.

Some universities require that we have a formal presentation before we submit the thesis right? It's a requirement at Macquarie University as well.

No. While many other universities have a *viva voce*, *oral* defense or a pre-completion seminar, Macquarie University doesn't have that requirement. Your PhD is examined by the thesis only. Some departments may ask you to do a seminar in your final year close to the submission, but this is not a University requirement for PhD graduation.

Submission

Do we need to submit the Authorship contribution statement form in the submission portal or somewhere else other than including it in the thesis before each paper.

Yes, a copy of the authorship contribution form for each paper should be uploaded into the submission portal.

Can a paper be considered within the thesis by publication if it has been rejected by one journal but has been resubmitted to another journal?

Yes. It is common, even for senior academics, to receive one or more rejections from journals for a paper. That can often feel very discouraging but don't let it stop you! Consider the feedback, revise the paper where you see fit, and then submit it to another journal.

If the paper has been submitted but been rejected within a short time. How do you describe it in thesis?

You would describe the article as "in preparation", ideally for the next journal you wish to submit to.

Rejection of the thesis: What happens when a Thesis by Publication is rejected, or there are not enough articles to support it? Are you expected to go through the monograph format then?

No. If the PhD outcome is Fail (which is *extremely* rare), then you cannot resubmit. If the outcome is Revise and Resubmit, then you would revise the thesis as recommended by the examiners. You may need to add a chapter or make significant revisions to existing chapters, but it is unlikely that the examiners would ask you to change the format of your thesis from TbP to monograph format.

Cotutelle agreements

Do you happen to have any specific guidance re theses that will be submitted to two institutions under a cotutelle agreement? Thank you!

As long as the TbP format complies with the thesis policies of your other institution, it is an option available for cotutelles. Please consult your Cotutelle agreement, where there is usually a section describing the protocol for thesis submission at each of your partner universities. For further advice, contact our Cotutelle team on gr.international@mq.edu.au.

Can papers started or published during a Phd started at another institution, be included in my thesis at MQ if I am now a cotutelle student.

You will need to check this on a case-by-case basis, but if the previously published papers do not exceed 50% of the research and were published as part of the one PhD project then yes, you can include them.

Journal ranking

Does journal status count e.g A star, A, B, C ranked journals on the [Australian Business Deans Council ranking system](#)?

Some faculties recommend that you aim for the journal with the highest impact factor, and then work your way down if your paper is rejected, but there is no official policy on which journal you publish in. Sometimes, journal selection depends on your topic and subject. Journal compatibility is a big determining factor in journal selection. Aim as high as you think you can, apply to one journal at a time, start with the top journals if you want to but have a list of other potential journals you could target. These should fit the scope of your research.

For more info on journal ranking metrics, check out the [Journal Quality & Impact LibGuide](#)

MRes Thesis by Publication

For MRes Year 2, do I need more than one paper for a thesis by publication? Given that I've only got 10 months, if one paper is insufficient, should I include another chapter in the form of a traditional thesis?

We don't have specific information about MRes Theses. It would require having a discussion with your supervisor about how best to present the research, you may have to add an extra chapter or even rewrite the article into a fuller chapter or you may have to expand a couple of sections.

My research project spans my MRes and PhD. The work from my MRes thesis got published during my PhD candidature. I also included some additional analysis in the paper. Could I include the published paper in my PhD TbP?

Since you have reworked your MRes research by including additional analysis, and since the publication date is within your PhD candidature, yes, you could include that publication as a chapter in your PhD TbP.

A caveat when considering including MRes research in the PhD: in the front pages of your PhD is your declaration that the work has not been submitted for any other degree. If you have not reworked the research, you may need to cite your MRes thesis or the paper based on your MRes research, rather than inserting it in as a chapter in your PhD.

Do I have to have to have papers published in a Q1 journal.

No. You can aim for a high ranking journal, but it is not a requirement.

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